

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 0364

E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, MO, SS
SUBJ: SAHARA DEVELOPMENTS

1. SUMMARY: SAHARA-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN PROMINENT IN THE NEWS, AS MOROCCO REACTED STRONGLY TO AN APPARENT TERRORIST INCIDENT IN SOUTHERN MOROCCO, ADDRESSED THE SPANISH CORTES' RESOLUTION ON THE SAHARA, ANNOUNCED "ACCEPTANCE" OF OAU SAHARA SUMMIT IN LIBREVILLE, AND CONTINUED TO WATCH BOUMEDIENE'S TRAVELS. SOME OBSERVERS FEAR THAT POLISARIO INABILITY TO OPERATE AS BEFORE INSIDE MAURITANIA WILL LEAD TO NEW INCIDENTS IN NORTH, FORCING GOM TO COME TO GRIPS WITH DOCTRINE OF HOT PURSUIT.
END SUMMARY

2. CIVILIANS KIDNAPPED IN S. MOROCCO: MININT COMMUNIQUE DATED
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JANUARY 14 CHARGED THAT "ARMED BAND COMING FROM ALGERIA" ATTACKED TWO CIVILIAN TRUCKS JAN. 11 NEAR ZAAG, IN SE MOROCCO (NORTH OF SAHARA), KIDNAPPING SEVEN AND KILLING THREE OTHERS WHO RESISTED. COMMUNIQUE CLAIMED THAT FOUR MONTHS OF CALM HAD PREVAILED IN SAHARA, AND THAT POLISARIO HAD HAD TO RESORT TO "SAFER" ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS IN FACE OF MOROCCAN ARMY'S EFFICIENCY. THE GOM WOULD NOT REMAIN INACTIVE AND WOULD DO EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO

"RIGHT THE HARM" TO ITS CITIZENS. PRO-GOVERNMENT AL MAGHREB EDITORIALIZED THAT GOM WOULD EXERCISE ALL OF ITS "RIGHTS," AND ISTAQLAL'S L'OPINION JAN. 16 CALLED OUTRIGHT FOR EMPLOYMENT OF RIGHT OF PURSUIT. PRO-GOVERNMENT AL MITHAQ AL WATANI WONDERED JAN. 17 WHETHER ALGERIA WAS NOT TRYING TO PROVOKE MOROCCAN RETALIATION AND/OR MAKE MOROCCO SPREAD ITS FORCES THINLY.

3. MININFO TOLD PRESS JAN. 16 THAT GOM HAD PROTESTED THE ACT TO UN, OAU, AND ARAB LEAGUE.

4. OAU SUMMIT. MININFO ALSO INFORMED PRESS THAT MOROCCOA AND MAURITANIA HAD ACCEPTED BONGO PROPOSAL THAT LIBREVILLE BE SITE FOR SPECIAL OAU SAHARA SUMMIT, WHICH ELSEWHERE (LIBREVILLE 0132) REPORTED AS SCHEDULED MARCH 24-30. MOROCCO'S FOCUS IN CONFERENCE WOULD BE ON MOROCCANS DETAINED IN TINDOUF AND ON ENDING ALGERIAN AGGRESSION. IN EARLIER DECLARATION ON JAN. 14, MININFO STATEMENT HAD CALLED FOR HOLDING OF SUMMIT ASAP.

5. SPANISH CORTES: GOM MININFO ISSUED STRONGLY WORDED COMMUNIQUE JAN. 15 KEYED TO SPANISH CORTES' FONAFF COMMITTEE RESOLUTION ON THE SAHARA. "ANY ATTEMPT TO CHANGE REALITY (OF SAHARA INTEGRATION) CAN ONLY BE CONSIDERED UNACCEPTABLE INTERFERENCE," COMMUNIQUE STATED. MININFO WENT ON TO STRESS THAT SAHARA SOLUTION MUST BE FOUND WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF SPECIAL OAU SUMMIT. SUBSEQUENTLY, HOWEVER, GOM ATTEMPTED TO PLAY DOWN IMPORTANCE OF RESOLUTION. PRIMIN OSMAN, ADDRESSING LARGE VISITING DELEGATION OF SPANISH CONFIDENTIAL

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BUSINESSMEN AND JOURNALISTS JAN. 16, PRAISED SPANISH FONMIN'S DECLARATION ON THE SAHARA OF THE PREVIOUS WEEK AS BEING FULLY CONSISTENT WITH 1975 MADRID ACCORDS.

6. BOUMEDIENE TRAVELS: THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL REACTION YET TO REFERENCES TO SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE MOSCOW COMMUNIQUE ON BOUMEDIENE'S VISIT (MOSCOW 607 NOTAL), BUT ISTIQLAL'S (PARTY LEADER BOUCETTA IS FONMIN) L'OPINION EDITORIALIZED HOPEFULLY JAN. 17 THAT ALGERIANS SHOULD TAKE NO COMFORT FROM IT SINCE IT DID NOT SIGNIFY THAT USSR SHARED ALGERIAN VIEWS ON THE SAHARA. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, GOM IS CONVINCED BOUMEDIENE'S ME POSITION AND RECENT TRAVEL AIMED AT GAINING SUPPORT FOR ALGERIA'S SAHARA POSITION.

7. COMMENT: IN TRUMPETING ALLEGED KIDNAPPING, GOM UNDOUBTEDLY HOPING TO PROLONG INTERNATIONAL HOSTILITY TOWARDS ALGERIA IN WAKE OF FRENCH HOSTAGES AFFAIR. IN ADDITION, THERE IS CONCERN THAT THE POLISARIO, HAVING BEEN FOR THE MOMENT QUIETED IN MAURITANIA, MAY TURN ITS ATTENTION TO MOROCCAN TERRITORY. MOST MOROCCANS WOULD RATHER NOT SEE KING FORCED TO EXERCISE THE RIGHT OF PURSUIT ENUNCIATED IN HIS NOVEMBER 6, 1977 SPEECH. HEIGHTENED ACTION INSIDE MOROCCO OR IN THE NORTHERN SAHARA COULD BRING HIM TO

GRIPS WITH THAT DOCTRINE, HOWEVER.

8. AS TO OAU SPECIAL SUMMIT, WE NOTE GABONESE STATEMENT THAT ALL PARTIES HAVE ACCEPTED LIBREVILLE AS A VENUE. WE JUDGE THERE WILL BE CONSIDERABLE FURTHER MANEUVERING AND THE LATE FEBRUARY OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING IN TRIPOLI MAY WELL SEE CRUCIAL DEBATE ON THE SUBJECT. A PARTICULARLY CONTENTIOUS ISSUE WILL BE SAHARAN REPRESENTATION, AND ATTAINING A QUORUM COULD ALSO POSE STUMBLING BLOCK.

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